

GURU NANAK'S MESSAGE TO MANKIND

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AKĀL SAHAI!

Unless there is corroborating evidence, discourses on religion tend to degenerate into "empty tale full of sound and fury, signifying nothing." In this assembly of wise men, let our discourses centre around verified personal experiences rather than hearsay, for in any court of law it is direct evidence that counts. There is more misunderstanding in the domain of religion than in art, science or history and this is due to that fact that we ignore the above axiom in actual practice although we bow to it in theory.

All that is, is mortal and confined but man feels that he can, if he will, jump over these encircling walls of Time and Space and become free and immortal. True religion is escape from the choked and suffocating atmosphere of time and an ascent to that sun-kissed Peak where no earth-born clouds darken the vision and stupefy the senses. Who can describe the glory of the New World which unveils itself to Man thus emancipated? To find this Religion is to be transfigured even as Moses was transfigured on Mt. Sinai, and Jesus on another "high mountain apart" near Hermon. This True Religion is for all times and for all corners of the earth; it transcends all limitations, for is it not Life — immortal? — ONE, with the Supreme One Himself!

Brethren! It is *this* Religion that this humble devotee is a worshipper. It is of this Religion and of this alone that the great Gurus were exponents. I know there are a hundred and one religions in this world, nay more, but this True Religion is their consummation, their goal, their towering apex. All other religions are but radii springing from and returning to this self-centred Locus.

Referring to this Transcending Religion, our Tenth and the Last Guru sang as follows, in his autobiography:

As God spoke to me, I speak unto all the world,
I pay no regard to any one but Him,
I am not satisfied with so-called religions

I sow the seed of the Transcendent Religion,
I am not a worshipper of matter,
Nor am I satisfied with any set religious garb,
I sing the honeyed Name of the Infinite,
And am thus indissolubly knit with Him. (Bichitra Natak, X)

It must be at once clear that we rise up this religion not by one jump, but in slow steps, i.e., by slow probation and by gradually expanding efficiency. All seers, sages, Masters and Messiahs are initiates of this religion, and we cannot use for them the title of Mahatma, i.e., "high-souled," until they have reached this Apex. Jacob's Ladder, referred to in the Old Testament, is said to span the distance between heaven and earth. If there is some such Ladder, as indeed there is, imagine how numerous must be its rungs, Many years must needs be spent before the period of probation or "discipleship" as we call it in Sikhism is over.

Whom then do we call a "Guru"? One who is so born, who passes all his life or the largest part of it, in a God-inebriated condition, which although world-minded men rarely understand, is the very breath of life of a devotee. Our Master Nanak was misunderstood many a time by his own erring father, and at one time his father called a physician to cure his son of this "mysterious ailment." The Guru replied (he was then barely out of the cradle) — "The physician is sent to prescribe a remedy; he taketh my hand and feeleth my pulse. The ignorant physician knoweth not that it is within the recesses of my mind that the pangs spring. Physician, go back, do not annoy me, I am imbued with my Lord, what can this medicine do to ally that hidden pain?" Here is a Born Master — Guru par excellence — who is an exponent of this Transcendent Religion!

Brethren, I am a votary of this Transcendent Religion which, like an oak tree is a plant of slow growth, but grows steadily. The ape-in-man and the tiger-in-him must slowly be subdued and tamed. He must surely be a false idealist who thinks that man or modern civilisation has reached its culminating point, and that religion likewise has also reached its final phase. We are approaching in this Religion the very Acme of Excellence. Hence the Gurus say that this Religion is like walking on a dagger's edge, or on a bridge even finer than a hair's breadth! This True Religion is a life concern, not a few days' pilgrimage. It is an every day concern of the seeker-after-truth. Our Masters emphasized this when selecting their successors and none was chosen who was not worthy, or thoroughly in earnest. Sometimes even sons and other lineal descendants had to cast out in favour of those who were more fit for the change. Guru Nanak rejected his sons in favour of an outsider. When the eldest son of the Sixth Guru, namely

Ram Rai, fell below the mark, the Guru rejected him with the following biting reproof: — “the Guruship is like a tigress’ milk which can only be contained in a golden cup. Only he who is ready to devote this life thereto is worthy of it. Let Ram Rai not look on my face again. Let him abide with Aurangzeb and amass money at his court. There were others who sought admission into the Sacred Fold by undergoing bloodcurdling ordeal — shedding their own blood, being strangled inch by inch, being cut in twain by saws, or by being flayed alive! Such is the Sacrosanct Fold at which the Initiates aim. And the first preliminary, obviously, is every day practice, purity and self-sacrifice.

What is the Heart of Sikhism, and what solution has it for the ailments of humanity? I will tell you of the strangest, eeriest, highest Principle on earth, that has been here, and shall last to endless eternity, and having lost which, man floundered, went astray and got lost deep in the morass of worldliness; and as a result of which neglect this beautiful world is overrun with disease, decay and recurring wars. “NĀM” is sometimes rendered into English by the “Word” but I prefer the old Greek name, “Logos,” for this denotes that it is the seed of all knowledge, all science, all philosophy — for do not all sciences end with self-same suffix “ology,” viz.: biology, psychology, theology, and so on? Mark the word Logos, and I will tell you how it is the panacea for all our modern ailments, whether individual, social, national or international. For want of adequate words, I will describe the glory of this elusive Something in the language of my Lord and Master, thus:

What words can tell the bliss of NAM realised?

He who attempteth, faileth and repenth,
Nor pen, nor paper, nor writer are equal to the task,
Nor doth hard thinking further the attempt!

Such is the eerie-NAM — the Revealing Unwritten Word
Transcending this conditioned world;
He alone knoweth who heareth it with Mind’s Ear,
But such happy souls are verily rare!

This realization crowneth the devotee’s mind
With enlightenment and all seeing intuition;
Yes, it unfoldeth unto the listening ear
The whole plan of world’s evolution!

Realising the Self by NAM, the listener riseth
Superior to all shocks of this workaday world
Nor doth he fear any longer the dreaded angel of Death
For, is he not with wisdom armed?

The door of salvation openeth unto him,
Yes, to him who realiseth this eerie-NAM
Having slipped the Death Angel's noose,
He releases one and all, his kith and kin.

He who realiseth the Self by NAM, findeth
All impediments from his weary path removed,
And when he departeth he goeth openly,
With a wreath of laurels crowned!

(Guru Nanak Dev's JAPJI)

Of this Unwritten-Word, it is that Nanak sings again and again, calling it the Architect-impersonal of the world:

By This Unwritten-Word thou didst outspread
All Cosmos with its teeming creatures;
And from thence did issue forth
The million-rivered Nature! (JAPJI)

This again is the “Voice” to which Tennyson refers in the “Ancient Sage”:

“If thou would’st hear the Nameless and wilt dive
Into the temple-cave of thine own self
There, brooding by the central altar, thou
Mayst haply learn the Nameless hath a Voice —
By which thou wilt abide, if thou be wise.”

This Something is realizable, experimentable, well within our reach, if only we become disciples of Him who is Its True Teacher, Nanak, whose soul is enshrined in what we call Guru Granth, the Sikh Bible. That ghostly-Something is the burden of the Sikh Bible, and it is That which spans heaven and earth by that mystical Jacob’s Ladder of which I have spoken. You have only to rise up on the rungs of that Ladder, the NAM, when a New World will open itself to you, and you will get the same vision of the Promised Land of the Millennium as Moses had from Mount Pisgah! Brethren, it is beyond words to describe the calm, peace and glory that will come over you when you reach that rarefied Height within you. Then all pangs and worries are laid aside, all craving is allayed by fulfillment and man is glorified, transmuted, transfigured even as the Son of Man was transfigured. Guru Nanak tells you that the same glory, the same edification, which the Son of Man realised, is open to you, to me, to one and all. Hold fast

to that all-satisfying NAM, which you and I can discover, if only we care to. Discovering It each man becomes the Son of Man or better the Man, and he is re-united with the Formless One! This is real union; this is enlightenment; this is expansion into infinite individuality, for has not man thus shuffled off the mortal coil woven by the loom of Time and Space, and donned instead that impalpable Mantle which God Himself spinneth, and which angels aspire to wear!

Guru Nanak not only kindled this flame in the breast of this or that disciple, but by bringing the disciples to his own level, showed how Sikhism begins with enlistment as a disciple and ends with nothing less than Deification! Thus was Nanak turned into Nanak II, and the same process continued for no less than ten successions, whereafter the Divine Flame was absorbed into the Sikh Commonwealth at large! It is now available to one and all. Sikhism specializes in this Art of deification, and throws its doors open to all who may care to qualify and enter.

Above all, this World Principle, NAM, is the solvent of all castes, creeds and distinctions, and those who are Fellows of their weird-world-possession are no longer cut-off by an artificial partition such as caste, colour or continent, by they are real Brothers, BHAIS, as we call them, for are they no regenerate Sons of the Self-same Father, one in the Holy Ghost; the NAM? Here is then a much needed solution of all our ailments, pangs, needs and worries, national and international. Brethren, you do need a Universal-Solvent, and nothing less. You know how the white colour is a good solvent and it knits to-day the White Race against the coloured rare, but you know as I do that this is not a universal-solvent. That must needs cover all continents; it must transcend all fetters of Time and Space. There is but one thing between God and man which can bridge this chasm. This Universal Bridge is the NAM, the Unwritten-Revealing Word, — I call it “Revealing” rather than revealed word, for it is itself a source of illumination. Did not the sages say of old that the greatest of all evils is avidya, i.e., ignorance? But ignorance of what? Not of this or that science, for there are many scientists among us, but of that fundamental enlightening universal Principle called NAM, which is the blessed world-solvent. Then man will sing with Nanak:

“None is mine enemy, none an outsider,”
Saith Nanak, “all are my brethren.”

To the Christian, Guru Nanak, if he came to this World Fellowship of Faiths, would say:

“Carriers of the Cross, my greetings to ye, one and all. Ye

are the torch-bearers of light to the modern world. Ye rescued Europe from the dark ages. Ye carried the lamp of learning to all corners of the earth, including the desolate corners of the Sahara, by your self-less and wide-spread missions. All this is good and augurs for the best. But more is expected of ye, for ye had more talents to spend that others races had."

Ye are rightly proud of Jesus the Christ, but I must draw your attention to what is called the Christ-Principle. For ye, as ye are well aware, Paul did not see the Christ but saw and experienced the Christ-Principle. In all the Epistles of St. John, St. Peter and St. James it is this Principle which is the chief object of discussion and of attainment, and this Principle is no other than the eternal-revealing-Word; the NAM. Ye know the opening words of that all-important Gospel, according to St. John: "In the beginning was the word (NAM or LOGOS) and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." This Word is the Christ-Principle, i.e., that eternal Principle which, as I have stressed, is the only bridge between earth, God and man. St. Peter refers to it as "the Word of the Lord that endureth forever." It is to this again that St. Paul refers when he says: "For I delivered unto you first of all, which I also received." It is by getting into touch with this eternal revealing Word that Faith cometh, not otherwise. St. Paul says: "Faith cometh by (Its) hearing." This gift is within but is overlaid with worldliness, and we must stir it up by *Simran* i.e., remembrance. As St. Paul says: "Thou stir up the gift of God, which is in thee." To discover this NAM, this Word, is to be rightly baptized. Does not Clement of Alexandria thus exclaim about this baptism: "Being baptized, we are enlightened; being enlightened, we are adopted as sons; being adopted, we are complete; being complete, we are rendered immortal." This baptism it was which St. Peter recommended in this first Epistle General: "Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the WORD (NAM) of God, which liveth and abideth fore ever."

What is intended is not some floating tradition, but a real, eternal, verifying Principle, the NAM, forgetting which Christianity is not to-day what it was in the days of the blessed Christ of yore. It was not by any day-dream that St. Paul was converted, but by his abiding possession of NAM, the Spirit; for does he not say: "For by the Spirit we are all baptized into one body." St. Paul makes it abundantly clear that this abiding Principle is the manna referred to in the Old Testament, the spiritual drink, the spiritual meat. We misjudge the heart of Christianity if instead of the aforesaid eternal Possession, we eat only the "bread and wine" that is offered to us to-day at the Mass. Brethren, let us be "partakers of the Holy Ghost" and of the nothing

less.

Believe me, I love Jesus the Christ, and I have been trying to bring out what is of practical importance to each and every Christian, namely the Christ-Principle, or as St. Paul puts it rather dramatically “Jesus Christ the same yesterday and to-day, and forever.”